



## *The Frambridge Chronicle*

*News from the Minister & Congregation of the Unitarian Meeting House,  
Bridge Street, Framlingham*

The marking of the Tercentenary (1717-2017) of the Framlingham Unitarian Meeting House is an opportunity to seek a better understanding of Unitarian history - revealing ideas and concerns from the past which continue to influence us although there have been remarkable changes in thought which our communities have undergone.

In the main our oldest Unitarian congregations are English Presbyterian in origin. Our Meeting House at Bury St Edmunds was founded by Presbyterians, while at Framlingham our Meeting House was founded in 1717 by a more diverse group of Dissenters including Presbyterians.

A seismic event was the "Great Ejection" of over 2,000 clergy from the Church of England following the Act of Uniformity 1662, after the restoration of the monarch, Charles II, in 1660. In requiring clergy to use the Book of Common Prayer, the Royalist parliament were forcing the Presbyterians to accept the authority of Bishops - which our Presbyterians forebears considered contrary to scripture.

A large proportion of these Puritan clergy were Presbyterians. From the fact of their expulsion, we can see that they never sought willingly to leave and become a church apart - the separation from the Church of England was forced upon them.

This dispute may seem extremely remote from our everyday concerns in the 21st century. However, the relevance for our congregation today is that it has been engendered to exercise the ability to choose its own path. The independence of our congregation mirrors the spiritual determinacy of our forebears which we value so highly - our right and responsibility to think autonomously in religious matters, while being conscious of what we owe to and learn from our traditions.

For the English Presbyterians - once the most significant group in the Church of England - the parish was their ideal centre of community, whereas other Puritan groups saw themselves as gathered entities set apart... 'sects' in the full sense of the word. This indicates that the English Presbyterians were not in principle seeking to be exclusive. Over a hundred years later it would be the experience of the Great Ejection and the ensuing influence of the Enlightenment that would prompt many English Presbyterian congregations to turn Unitarian.

Perhaps we feel inhibited in sharing what we value about our congregations partly because we wish to avoid being perceived by our acquaintances as belonging to what may appear to them to be a "sect". We ourselves ought not to think of the Unitarian community in such a way. We are much less interested in marking our boundaries where being 'Unitarian' ends and everything else begins - than we are concerned in how we can interact with and reach out to those around us; in how we can contribute towards fostering compassion, tolerance and respect for diversity in the wider community.

Attending and perhaps joining this congregation is not primarily about acquiring a label. As your minister, I'm happy for individuals to be 'Unitarian', or to seek meaningful identification with this and the wider community. You only 'get the T shirt', so to speak, if you want one!

Being Unitarian is about being open to and living out the humanity of Unitarian values. Any 'label' is not a requirement of membership - still less of being an attender here.

### *Matthew*

**NB** Any articles published in *The Frambridge Chronicle* express the individual views of the author. -Ed.

**Please Note** the Minister's **REST DAYS** are **THURSDAYS** and **FRIDAYS** except in the case of a pastoral emergency

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Services in February 2017			
Date	Time	The Unitarian Meeting House Bridge St Framlingham, IPI3 9AJ	The Unitarian Meeting House Churchgate St., Bury St Edmunds IP33 1RH
5 February	3 p.m.		<i>Why we need ritual</i>
12 February	4 p.m.	<i>Can faith and science be friends?</i>	
19 February	11 a.m.		<i>Austerity or Abundance?</i>
26 February	4. p.m.	<i>Thoughts on Pain</i>	

**New:** **STUDY Group “SOUL to SOUL”** starting in **February** will be run by the Minister. Dates and times are to be confirmed. Please let Matthew know if you are interested in taking part. Meetings will once again be held at the home of Rayleen Finn, **Pilgrim’s Cottage** on the Badingham Road, Framlingham. We are extremely grateful to Rayleen for her continuing hospitality.

**In the Meeting House during February:**

**Monday 6 and Monday 20 February 10 a.m. – 12 noon FRAMLINGHAM ART CLUB** (meeting on alternate Mondays throughout the month).

**New:** **Every Monday and Tuesday at 4 p.m. DRAMA CLASSES FOR YOUNGSTERS.** For details, please telephone **Fiona McAlpine 07779 060717.**

**New:** **Monday 20 February at 7 p.m. Monthly MINDFULNESS Classes** are now open to all who may not yet have taken part in one of Barbara Winfield’s courses. If you are intending to go, **please first phone Barbara: 01728 720029** and she will be glad to explain what is involved

**Every Tuesday 10 – 12 noon CAFE CONNECT – Greta** is taking a break from running this group: we are deeply grateful to her for all she has done for our community and look forward to seeing her on Tuesday mornings. **CAFÉ CONNECT** will now be run by **Angela Hatt** and **Brenda Smith**, supported by **Deborah Gane:** a warm and most appreciative welcome to the new “team”.

**Saturday 11 February 9.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. GREENER FRAM FREE RECYCLE, SWAP OR MEND**

Fair Trade Refreshments for sale, donations welcome in support of the Framlingham Arts & Youth Project (FAYAP).

**N.B. TERCENTENARY NEWS** Please reserve the weekend **13/14 May.** In outline: on **Saturday 13 May**, there will be an informative and celebratory evening event; in the afternoon of **Sunday 14 May** there will be a tea and a special service. Look out for more details in the March edition of the *Frambridge Chronicle.* - *Matthew*

**On Hold Yoga & Mindfulness Group for Mums** on Thursday mornings, but if you are keen to attend, do contact Wendy McLennan **07789 692412** or [wendy@trainbodyandbrain.com](mailto:wendy@trainbodyandbrain.com).

**Deadline for the March edition is 12 noon Monday 20 February 2017**